

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 01776 061627Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00  
PA-02 SP-02 /027 W  
-----085613 070158Z /73  
R 061710Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
TO USINFO WASHDC  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0618

UNCLAS DUBLIN 01776

E.O. 11652: N/A  
SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 6, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES  
JUNE 6, 1978 UNDER HEADING TIMELY RECOGNITION:

THE AWARD OF FOUR TONYS - THE BROADWAY STAGE  
EQUIVALENT OF THE HOLLYWOOD OSCARS - TO HUGH LEONARD'S  
PLAY, "DA," IS A TIMELY RECOGNITION OF THE MAN WHO MUST  
BE CONTEMPORARY IRELAND'S MOST PRODUCTIVE PLAYWRIGHT.  
IT IS OVER THIRTY YEARS NOW SINCE JOHN KEYES BYRNE,  
THEN A YOUNG CLERICAL OFFICER IN THE LAND COMMISSION,  
HAS HIS FIRST PLAY PRODUCED, AND HIS PSEUDONYMN OF  
HUGH LEONARD BEGAN TO RING FAINT BELLS IN THE  
THEATRICAL WORLD.

IT IS NEARLY TWENTY YEARS SINCE HE HAD HIS FIRST BIG  
SUCCESS WITH HIS ADAPTATION OF "PORTRAIT OF THE  
ARTIST" UNDER THE TITLE OF "STEPHEN D.," AND IT IS  
FIVE YEARS SINCE HIS PRESENT AWARD-WINNER, "DA," HAD  
A MAJOR SUCCESS, WITH JOHN MCGIVEN, KEVIN MCHUGH  
AND CHRIS O'NEILL, AT THE DUBLIN THEATRE FESTIVAL  
OF 1973.

LEONARD HIMSELF WOULD BE THE FIRST TO ACKNOWLEDGE  
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THAT MUCH OF THAT ORIGINAL SUCCESS WAS DUE TO  
MCGIVER'S MAGNIFICENT CHARACTERISATION OF THE OLD  
DALKEY GARDENER WHO WAS THE DRAMATIST'S FOSTER-  
FATHER; HE WOULD ALSO BE THE FIRST TO REGRET THAT  
MCGIVER DID NOT LIVE TO REPEAT HIS DUBLIN AND  
WASHINGTON TRIUMPHS ON BROADWAY.

SINCE 1956 AND "THE BIG BIRTHDAY," LEONARD HAS WRITTEN OVER TWENTY PLAYS FOR THE STAGE, AS WELL AS COUNTLESS WORKS FOR TELEVISION. NOT ALL OF THE PLAYS WERE SUCCESSFUL, AND HE WAS BEGINNING TO HAVE A COMPLEX THAT HIS ONLY SUCCESSFUL WORK LAY IN ADAPTATIONS, WHEN THE SUCCESS OF THE COMPLETELY ORIGINAL "DA" CURED HIM.

IT IS A HIGHLY PERSONAL PLAY, FULL OF LOVE FOR THE FOSTER-PARENTS WHO ADOPTED HIM, BUT WITHOUT A TRACE OF SENTIMENTALITY. IT WAS ALSO, IN A SENSE, AN EXERCISE IN AUTO-THERAPY AND, IN WRITING IT, THE AUTHOR CLEANSED HIMSELF OF ANOTHER COMPLEX, TO FIND HIS OWN IDENTITY.

HE HAS HAD INDIFFERENT LUCK WITH OTHER PLAYS THAT DESERVED BETTER. SOME THAT COME TO MIND ARE "THE AU-PAIR MAN," "THE POKER SESSION," AND "TIME WAS." SO, IT MIGHT NOT BE UNTIMELY TO SUGGEST, NOW THAT BROADWAY HAS RECOGNISED HIS WORTH, THAT THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF IRELAND SHOULD CONSIDER EMPHASISING THE HONOUR BY PRODUCING A SEASON OF HUGH LEONARD'S PLAYS. KRENE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, HONOR AWARDS, THEATER (DRAMA)  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 06 jun 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Review Media Identifier:**  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2480883  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 6, 1978 FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 6, 1978 UNDER HEADING TIMELY RECOGNITION  
**TAGS:** SCUL, SOPN, EI, US, (LEONARD, HUGH)  
**To:** ICA  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/dd196e91-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014